

The Focus

January, 1917

State Normal School
Farmville, Virginia



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*ALL Nature was to him an open book—
The hand that penned its epics was divine.
The heavens, with all the myriad stars a-shine;
The sparkling ripple of the tiny brook,
Each had its place within his heart. He took
A rare delight in beauty—every line
Or curve in arching tree or trailing vine
Was ecstasy; he loved each fern-draped nook.*

*A wondrous mind was his: from morn till night
He stored it from the ponderous tomes he read;
The world acknowledged him most erudite.
Yet plain and simple was the life he led;
To serve his fellowman was his delight;
And far and wide his gentle influence spread.*

Jennie Masters Tabb.

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THE FOCUS

VOL. VI

FARMVILLE, VA., JANUARY, 1917

NO. 8

In Memoriam

Dr. Francis Allen Millidge

1859—1916

Dr. H. A. Millidge*J. M. Grainger*

DR. F. A. MILLIDGE, of Farmville, who for many years has been well known and loved throughout Virginia as a teacher of geography in the State Normal School and as a lecturer on this and kindred subjects, died at Farmville, early Tuesday morning, November 21. The funeral services were held in the Auditorium of the School, Tuesday afternoon. The remains then lay in state in the parlors until midnight, when they were taken by train to Memphis, Tennessee, for final interment.

Dr. Millidge came of an old English family which has been prominent in the affairs of the State of Georgia ever since the first of the name who came to America landed with General Oglethorpe in 1733, as his secretary, friend and adviser. Milledgeville, the former capital of Georgia, bears the family name; and the University of Georgia, at its founding at Athens, received from the family estate the gift of a tract of 640 acres, which bears witness to the interest taken by the family from the beginning in the cause of education. At the time of the American Revolution, Dr. Millidge's great-grand-father, because he was a staunch Royalist, removed to Canada and settled in St. Johns, New Brunswick. There, after two generations, Francis Allen Millidge was born in 1859, the twelfth in a family of sixteen children. His mother was of Huguenot origin. The blending in him of Royalist and Huguenot is apparent to any one who knew Dr. Millidge's ever ardent loyalty to England, the keenness of his intellect, and the humble and truly devout, the unostentatious spirit of the man in his daily walk.

Young Millidge's career as a student was remarkably brilliant. It would seem that while he was at the University of New Brunswick, from which he took the degrees of B.A. and M.A., there was no prize or honor that he did not win. In fact the records show that when, for the second time, he won the Governor General Lord Dufferin's Gold Medal, perhaps the highest honor in the University, it was announced that, "because he was taking all the honors of the school, the medal would be given to the second best man." He won honors particularly in the classical languages, the natural sciences, and history. He began teaching while still a student at the University and twice since he was offered positions by his Alma Mater. On account of his health, however, he was compelled to seek a milder climate and came back South to the land of his forefathers.

For a number of years he devoted himself to teaching and study and attended summer courses at various institutions, including the famous Cook County Normal School in Illinois and the University of Chicago. On July 3, 1895, he married Nellis Penn Stanley, of Memphis, Tennessee, who survives him with their two sons, Stanley, now a junior in the University of Florida, and Lewis de Blois, who is in high school in Farmville.

Together the young couple worked and studied, taking several summer courses, particularly at the University of Chicago. Finally they went, with their one son, to Germany, the father to pursue work in philology, history, and science, and the mother to study music. Mr. Millidge attended courses at the Universities of Gottingen, Jena, and Leipzig. He drew the attention of both the students and the faculties of these institutions by his brilliant scholarship; and finally in 1905 Leipzig University awarded him the degree of Ph.D. *magna cum laude*, an honor hardly ever conferred on a foreign student. Twins were born to the Milledges during their stay in

Germany; and when an opportunity offered for Dr. Millidge to get a position there, he said, "No, we must return to the United States, because I want my sons to grow up Americans."

When the family returned to America in 1905, Dr. Millidge declined offers of positions in the Universities of New Brunswick and Manitoba on account of the climate, and after a year of teaching in Mississippi, came to the State Normal School at Farmville as head of the Department of Geography. Here he devoted himself with characteristic enthusiasm to his chosen work of teaching and supervising the teaching of geography, to lecture and institute work in this and other Southern States, to his own omnivorous reading and study, and to the education of his boys. As a teacher he stood alone, unique and inimitable. He abjured text-books. With his encyclopedic knowledge, his alert and eager mind, and a tongue that was ready for any emergency, he had a gift of condensed, yet clear, incisive, and withal interesting statement which enabled him to put his subject before his students as hardly another could have done it. He was always ready to bend his masterful intellect cheerfully to the service of even the dullest of students and often even helped them with other lessons than geography. To student debaters he was indispensable and whenever a talk of any nature was needed on a program he could always be relied on to throw new light on any subject and to speak with gripping interest. One important reason for his universal popularity was his quick sense of humor and his penetrating wit. He seldom failed to bring out the amusing point in any situation and he had an inexhaustible fund of humorous anecdote. His students always remember his quizzical smiling eyes and his jolly bursts of infectious laughter, for a class never passed without at least one good laugh. No student, however impervious to learning elsewhere, could sit under Dr. Millidge without being interested, and interest is the gateway to learning.

In the work of teachers' institutes in Virginia and of the many summer schools in the South, Dr. Millidge was a very useful factor. He had frequent and repeated calls for talks in many counties of Virginia, and during the past ten years had delivered lecture courses in the summer schools of the State Universities of Virginia, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Georgia, though he himself never sought such engagements.

It will always be a matter of regret to those who had the privilege of knowing his masterly handling both of the underlying principles and of the details in the exposition of his subjects, especially in the field of geography and history, that he did not write more. For with his all embracing memory and incessant reading he coupled remarkably keen and original thinking. Two reasons may be given for the comparative inactivity of his pen: constant occupation in the exhausting labor of teaching and lecturing, and poor health. Many of his former students have urged him to put into available form for them what he gave them in the class room and publishers have even invited him to write text-books for publication.

Though he seldom mentioned himself and his plans, he sometimes expressed the hope that the time would come when he might find leisure and strength to write. Yet he never gave himself the time nor found the strength to do it. And so it might seem that perhaps the best product of his intellect is lost to the world. It was his faith, however, and it must be true, that as his thought was caught up by the minds of his thousands of students and put to service, consciously or unconsciously, in the daily instruction of the children of Virginia and the South in geography, that science of sciences, which makes the whole world kin, so his work lives on, in a very real sense, and always will continue a power for good.

Though Dr. Millidge was born in the North, he was by natural inclination a Southerner. His warm, eager, idealistic nature chimed in with the Southern climate which he loved and with the spirit of the

Southern people. A strong ancestral tie would seem to have laid hold upon him and to have drawn him back to devote his life and his brilliant powers in loving service to the cause of education in the South. He married a Southern woman, and he brought his sons back to the South that they might grow up there among the truest of Americans. The South was his natural home. And yet until very late in his life he did not set his mind, as a more practical nature would have done, to acquiring the property which one with his gifts could easily have acquired, and which would establish him and his family in a permanent place of abode, in this land of his choice. At the time of his death, however, he was bending every effort toward establishing his family in a permanent home on a tract of land in Florida. There under the direction of Mrs. Millidge and the boys, a grove of orange and grape-fruit trees had been set out; and in another year his trees would have begun bearing. Then he could have left off the trying life of teaching and settle down to devote his leisure to realizing his plans for writing. But the end came too soon. Though he had made a home for his family, he himself will never share it. Yet he lives the more in the life of loving service which he lived for Virginia and the South.

In Memoriam

Elizabeth C. F. Malcolm

*AS one who loved him of the multitude
I try to set his kindly virtues down,
Recall the goodness of the kind old man,
Who lived in all our hearts,
His bubbling fun
That flowed in never ending streams and poured
Around us all and cheered our hearts each day,
His tenderness, the interest that he took
In all our lives. He was not one who walked
Apart from us; for each girl told her tale
Of joy or woe to him, or did we want
To know a thing, we sought him straight and found
The answer.
Ah! the day we learned that he
Had passed from out the bourne of time and place,
Had passed beyond the reach of all the things
That mean so much to us on earth; and we
Although we miss him sorely, yet may cry
God speed the weary traveller on his way.
Our days are numbered, and your years, like grass,
Cut down and faded, saith the Psalmist.
God! O grant that we may offer lives like his
Enriched with secret goodness, kindly heart,
And go, at length, to a tranquillity
Well-earned, as he did, who hath gone before.*

THE FOCUS

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Sworn to and subscribed before me this 2nd day of October, 1912.

J. L. BUGG, Notary Public.

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Editorial

I remember well the first time I saw Dr. Millidge. He was seated at the desk in his class-room, writing. His face was no more than four inches above the paper and the pencil he used was about as long as his forefinger. I asked him if I might "split" classes as my schedule was somewhat irregular. It seemed to be really a pleasure for him to allow me to do it.

Then he asked me if I had heard the war news for that day. He proceeded to explain the situation to me and became so interested that he jumped from his chair and walked over to the map. With his left hand thrust in the pocket of his coat, he stood there pointing places on the map and telling me things about the war I had never dreamed of before. Then he told me his favorite little joke about Erzerum. He said that the reason the Russians were so anxious to take the city was because their national drink, vodka, had been abolished. They were so eager for rum that they took the city of Erzerum.

Having had this little talk with Dr. Millidge, I was most anxious to begin classes with him. And his classes proved to be filled not only with geography, but much sound advice and fun. He always boasted that no class could exactly copy what he wrote on the board. He had his own way of having papers marked and he would write plainly on the board the very words he wanted the class to use and ask them to please copy them. Once he even promised ice cream cones to the whole class if no one made an error. But one girl left out a comma.

The little excursions on which Dr. Millidge took his classes in connection with their work were a source of great pleasure. He could seldom remember, however, which classes he had taken and which he had not. He often forgot details of this sort and it was also often difficult for him to associate the names and faces of girls. So, for days after the first excursion, he greeted each class with, "Young ladies, have you been to the brook?"

Dr. Millidge had learned the art of drawing on the board with the flat side of the chalk, and often when we entered his class room we found quaint little pictures on the board. Sometimes we found the story of Hiawatha shown, sometimes a tropical scene and once a frontier stockade. There seemed to be no end to the clever things Dr. Millidge knew.

At one time he set us into gales of laughter by his translation of the following bit of Latin:

Isabilli heres ago
Fortibus es in aro
Nosce mari thabe trux
Vobis innem, pes et dux.

According to him the English was:

I say Billy, here's a go,
Forty buses in a row.
No, see Mary, they be trucks,
What is in them? Peas and ducks.

Often his way of wording a question held a bit of humor. One day he said: "Let's take up some subject, nice and dry, for instance, the Sahara Desert."

He seemed to really love the girls. He was interested in hearing of their fun and pranks. He liked to speak of Joan of Arc in the hall as a member of the home department. He said she sat in that listening attitude to hear the girls meditate on Sunday afternoon.

No one was ever bored with his classes. Everybody loved them. He was unusually patient with the girls. He'd often say that he couldn't possibly expect us to remember a certain fact for he had only told us twenty times, but if he had told us twenty-one times, he was sure we would have known it.

Dr. Millidge's wonderful memory for facts, was a continual source of wonder to us. He seemed to remember everything he had ever heard or ever read. Figures, all sorts of statistics, little stories about people and things, he always had on the tip of his tongue. His breadth of knowledge was something almost beyond the conception of school girls. There seemed to be no subject one could bring up that Dr. Millidge was not well acquainted with and he always had something of value to add. Mingled with their love for him, the girls had a very, very great respect for his wonderful intellect.

This was Dr. Millidge in class. This was why the girls loved his classes so and felt that the benefit derived from them was something to help them in every phase of their life's work.

Outside of class, there seemed to be nothing that pleased him more than doing something to help the girls. He was eager to help when a debate was being prepared or when a knotty problem in teaching arose. But what stands foremost in our minds are his trips to Willis's Mountain and High Bridge. Every girl who wanted to go was welcome and every girl who went, enjoyed the trip. On the trips to High Bridge

we walked to the bridge and returned by train. The trip to the mountain was made in wagons. Dr. Millidge always had an inexhaustible store of little jokes to tell which kept up the fun from beginning to end. Then too, I remember, his comments on the things we saw as we passed. He'd notice a flower here, a tree there, a bird, a little strip of wood. They all had an appeal for him and it was proof enough that to him nature was not a mere machine, the knowledge of which he had mastered, but God's beautiful out-of-doors.

All of the girls loved him and they miss him. They miss his fun, his little bits of philosophy, his classes, and his helps which he was always so ready to give. And I think that in the heart of every girl in school, there's a place reserved for the memory of Dr. Millidge.

—*Myrtle Parker.*

✦ ✦ ✦ **Here and There** ✦ ✦ ✦

STAR COURSE

The second number of the Star Course was given in the auditorium on Nov. 28. It was "Ye Old New England Choir." The evening was very much enjoyed by a large and appreciative audience. The periods of New England life, in song and dress, were well carried out by a good quartette. Another good feature was the readings given by one of the ladies of the choir.

PROF. CLAPP

Prof. Clapp, of New York, spoke in the auditorium at 7.30 o'clock on Nov. 28 on "Better Speech." This was during Better Speech Week and Prof. Clapp was gotten under the auspices of the Pierian Literary Society.

JUNIOR-SENIOR GAMES

On Thanksgiving morning the first basketball champion game of the Juniors and Seniors was played in the gymnasium on account of the inclemency of the weather. The Seniors defeated the Juniors in a hard pitched battle and plenty of class spirit.

The second of these games was played the following Saturday morning on the Athletic field, the Juniors defeating the Seniors. The teams were about evenly matched and a good game ensued. Defense was good and skill was shown by Bain and Eberwine of the Juniors and Cahill and her Senior supporters in good plays.

The tie was played off the following Saturday afternoon at 3.00 o'clock. The Seniors defeated the Juniors in a well fought game and won the championship which they held as Juniors.

DRAMATIC CLUB

On December 8, the Dramatic Club presented their fall play, "Rose o' Plymouth Town," in the auditorium. The play was well presented and showed as usual the well developed talent of the girls, through Miss Wheeler's instruction.

The cast was as follows:

Miles Standish, *Captain of Plymouth*. . . Eugenia Lundie
 Garrett Foster, *of Weston's Men*. . . Mary Ellen White
 John Margeson, { *of the Ply-* . . . { Jessie Brett
 Philippe de la Noye, { *mouth Colonists* { Julia Stover
 Miriam Chillingsley, *cousin of the Captain*. . .

. Della Wicker
 Barbara Standish, *wife of the Captain*.

. Sallie P. Rawlings
 Rosolute Story, *aunt to the Captain* Earnestine McClung
 Rose de la Noye. Ethel Surface

CAROLS AND TABLEAU

On Monday evening, December 18, Christmas carols were sung by the Glee Club and all music classes of the school. The songs were well sung and very much enjoyed by a large audience, despite the snow-storm outside.

After the carols were sung, a tableau was given by the Y. W. C. A. cabinet and Town Girl's Committee. It was "The First Christmas" and was well worked out and beautiful with the tableau lights.

PLAYGROUND LECTURE

On Tuesday evening, Mr. Settle, field secretary of the National Playground Association, gave a lecture on "Playgrounds." This was very interesting, being illustrated by stereopticon slides.

JOKES DR. MILLIDGE TOLD IN CLASS

The Story Told

Boy	Gun
Gun	Bust
Joy	Boy
Fun	Dust

Why does a duck go into the water?

Answer—For *diverse* reasons.

Why does a duck come out of the water?

Answer—For *sundry* reasons.

Soft, thick pillows were made for soft, thick heads.

An Englishman speaking to oxen.—“Whoa! Beg your pardon. Gee!”

Here comes the trolley car,
 Here comes the dray,
 Here comes the little boy,
 Now, let us pray.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ Exchanges ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

The November number of the *Woman's College Journal* is an exceedingly clever one. It displays fine school spirit in that there is a department devoted to nearly every organization in the college and, furthermore, each department is interesting and well balanced.

"Countrymen" has a well-laid plot which is developed with great skill. The other stories, although short, are vivid and snappy. The essay on Riley is an excellent review of the charming personality of that one who "has left the world richer for the faith and hope and honest mirth that he brought it."

The Emory and Henry Era.—The opening article of this magazine is "Jiro and Hanna," in which the author has exhibited rare literary ability. This story is made more interesting to the reader because of the knowledge that it is based on facts. This is followed by "The Golden Autumn," which portrays the season in a vivid and easy style with the air of true poetry. "Ignorance Rewarded" is a story in which the author shows skill in making the plot and tact in developing it. "The Dawn of a New Day" is well written, while it holds the reader's attention and interest until the end is reached.

In the November issue of *The Blue and Gold* we are especially impressed with the school spirit, which is very prominent throughout the whole magazine. There is so much school news in this number that on reading the magazine one is almost made to feel as if she had paid a visit to the East Ten-

nessee State Normal School. The literary contributions of this number are not as good as they might be. On the whole the magazine is not well balanced. Would it not be a wiser plan to enlarge the Literary Department and give less space to the other departments?

The Student this month contains some unusually good articles. The majority of the stories are skillfully worked out, and they are extremely interesting in that there is so much in them which is true to life. "The Trees of God" is an article of depth, and in it there is much which inspires one to think of other things besides the common, sordid things of every day life. Viewing it from all sides, we conclude that *The Student* is one of the best high school magazines on our exchange list.

We welcome to our desk again the *Mary Baldwin Miscellany*. "His Guide in the Night" is a story of excellent quality and forceful style. "A Narrow Escape" is an amusing story which is true and vivid of school girls' experiences. The essays in the magazine are well written. On the whole, this number of the magazine, while not up to the highest standard, is a very creditable one.

We acknowledge with thanks our other exchanges not already mentioned.

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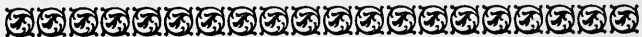
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